

## **The Public Health approach to violence reduction**

Traditionally, violence has been seen as a criminal justice issue. Yet we know that, long term, this approach to violence does not work – it merely contains the problem. Yet how can a public health approach be applied to the problem of violence?

Consider measles. If the criminal justice model was applied to measles, once someone became infected they would be locked up until they were no longer considered a danger to others, then they would be released. While this would make everyone else feel safer, it wouldn't reduce their chances of getting measles.

The public health approach to measles is to define the problem, look at the causes, examine what works and for whom and then, once solutions are defined, scale them up. In the case of measles, this solution was inoculation: a cheap and effective way of reducing the risk of what can be a fatal disease.

Applying this model to violence gave us the following information:

### **1. Defining the problem**

Violence is not consistent across Scotland. There are some areas where violence is highly visible and apparently endemic; however, there is also the violence that is less visible, such as domestic and elder abuse, which can cross all communities. Examining the scale of violence at a local level is essential to developing programmes that fit with community needs.

### **2. What are the causes**

The cause and risk of violence for each individual may be different. However, it is important to understand the triggers that impact across different types of violence in order to gain an insight into what makes people violent. The causes can be classified into four areas of risk: the individual, the relationship, the community and societal factors.

### **3. What works and for whom**

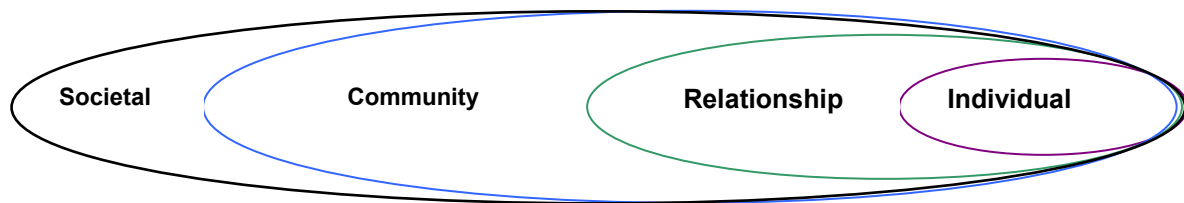
By identifying the causes and risks, there is an opportunity to develop tailored, effective interventions. Each partner and organisation will deliver specific outcomes, whether this is in relation to policing, education, health or employment. The list of agencies able to implement and become involved is limited only by their skills, capacity and willingness.

### **4. Implementation and dissemination**

It is essential that interventions and their outcomes are properly evaluated. Funding and resources should be gained and maintained on the basis of their success; therefore establishing and measuring performance indicators is necessary to assess the impact. This process is continuous and if the strategies are not successful there is

no point in continuing the practice. This is key to widespread implementation of effective practices.

The Public Health model as detailed below helps to identify the risk and the protective factors associated with violence. This model considers four key areas, starting with the individual and moving out to societal / cultural impact. Clearly, some of the areas identified in the model will only be relevant to particular forms of violence. However, by adopting this approach, the identification of influencing factors and where they impact should become clearer, therefore influencing the development and deployment of an effective intervention strategy.



- |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of punishment for precursor offences – knife carrying</li> <li>• Lack of visible swift justice</li> <li>• Lack of appropriate court disposals</li> <li>• Lack of appropriate change programmes</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural norms (acceptance of violence and weapons)</li> <li>• Legitimisation of violence as a means to resolve conflicts</li> <li>• Territorialism</li> <li>• Lack of Aspiration</li> <li>• Dependency Culture</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prevalence of gang culture</li> <li>• Poor parenting skills</li> <li>• Friends that engage in violence</li> <li>• Violent families – siblings/parents</li> <li>• Lack of significant adults/positive role model</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of communication skills</li> <li>Poor behavioural control</li> <li>Impulsiveness</li> <li>Early aggressive behaviour</li> <li>Lack of skills to deal with conflict – including identifying threatening situations.</li> <li>Inability to team work</li> <li>Exclusion from Services/Schools</li> <li>Nutrition Diet Health</li> <li>Alcohol</li> <li>Lack of employment opportunities (Because of lack of skills)</li> </ul> |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Establishing a full, clear picture of violence is an ongoing process: it is unlikely we will ever know all the causes of violence, but, by being brave and using what we already know, there is an opportunity to take positive steps to address the problem.

Collaborative working between organisations is the real strength of the public health approach. Tackling violence is not the sole domain of any one organisation: it is only through agencies working together that a sustainable difference can be made.